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ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades, a growing interest in career development has integrated findings from the fields of management theory, organizational development, adult learning, and developmental psychology to form a new framework for personnel development. This depends to a large extent upon viewing individuals as capable of tremendous growth and personal flexibility through continuous learning and challenge. The literature of staff development springs from the same theoretical bases and addresses the need for individuals and work groups to bring about renewal and enhanced effectiveness within the educational system. Many similarities of theory and practice occur in the fields of staff development and career development, suggesting that the terms are one, with applications in different arenas. University continuing educators should see the direct connection in the societal trend toward lifelong learning and increasing needs for career flexibility. Knowing how to accept personal responsibility in this dynamic environment is fast becoming a necessity, since job change every three and one-half years is the North American average. If university continuing educators accept a responsibility to equip adult students with basic life planning skills, there will be many other opportunities for new and innovative career programming for employees, practitioners, and managers in the field of career development. (KC)

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The Role of University Continuing Educators In Providing Career Development Education To Adult Students

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Outline

I. What is "Career Development"?

II. Lifelong Learning and Careers.

III. Programming Opportunities in Career Development: Social Need or Market Opportunity?

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SUMMARY

Over the past two decades, a growing interest in Career Development has integrated findings from the fields of Management Theory, Organizational Development, Adult Learning and Developmental Psychology to form a new framework for the optimization of employees. This depends to a large extent upon viewing individuals as capable of tremendous growth and personal flexibility through continuous learning and challenge. The literature of staff development springs from the same theoretical bases, and addresses the need for individuals and work groups to effect renewal and enhanced effectiveness within the educational system. In this paper I explore the similarities of theory and practise, and suggest that the terms staff development and career development are one, with applications in differing arenas.

My plea is that University Continuing Educators see the direct connection in our societal move toward lifelong learning and our increasing needs for career flexibility. Knowing how to accept personal responsibility in our dynamic environment is fast becoming a necessity, since job change every three and a half years is the North American average.

If we accept a responsibility to equip adult students with basic life planning skills, we can look ahead to many other opportunities for new and innovative career programming for employees, practitioners and managers in the field of Career Development.

1. What is Career Development?

Recently, the term Career Development has become so overused that it has almost ceased to have any generally agreed upon meaning! Individuals taking a training seminar will say they are engaged in "Career Development." Corporations planning a program of events and activities for thousands of employees over several years will title their efforts a "Career Development" initiative. Literature of the training and human resource professionals is full of articles on Career Development, Career Management, or Career Planning; in many instances using the terms interchangeably. This has caused general confusion.

Nevertheless, in the 1986 National Conference of the American Society for Training & Development, there were 27 sessions devoted to the topic of Career Development. This made it one of the top four topics at the Conference. These sessions were described as ones which:

> "focus on enhanced employee skill, performance, morale, job satisfaction and motivation; increased personal growth and ability to cope with change; and enhanced competencies for managers, supervisors, and Human Resource Development specialists in facilitating the Career Growth of employees."[1]

It is a concept whose time has come and one which has some natural and logical links with Continuing Education. It is fair to say that while the literature of business management has been discussing Career Development, the literature of the teaching profession has adopted the

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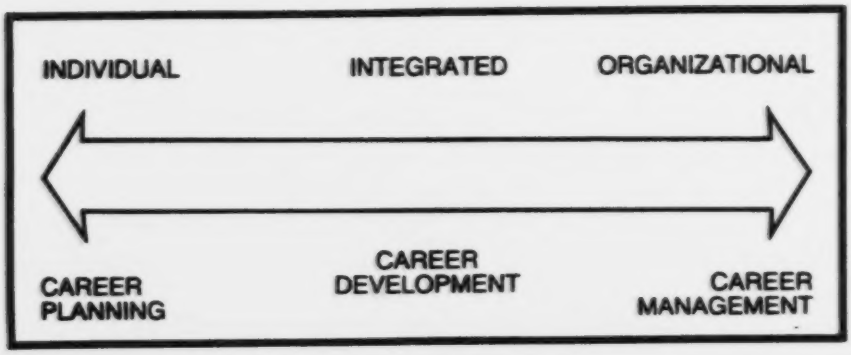
[1] Focus on Results, 42nd ASTD National Conference & Exposition brochure, p.6., 1986.

term Staff Development. The concepts are almost synonymous although the settings tend to be somewhat dissimilar.

Since Continuing Education often provides services to working adults from all walks of life, the term Career Development will be used to refer to

> "any activity or set of activities designed to enhance an organization through the promotion of the personal/professional growth of the management and/or employees of that organization."[2]



For the purpose of discussion, let us adopt a terminology that sees the entire field of employee development as a continuum which focuses around "locus of control". On the left, the most individually controlled and focussed, we would see Career Planning, Life-Work Planning, or Life-Skills Teaching. This area is in the hands of each individual who plans and acts to deliberately improve the quality of his or her own life. While the focus is definitely on the individual, the scope here is very broad. It is at this point that we define Career in its broadest possible terms! Every facet of our lives at home, at work,

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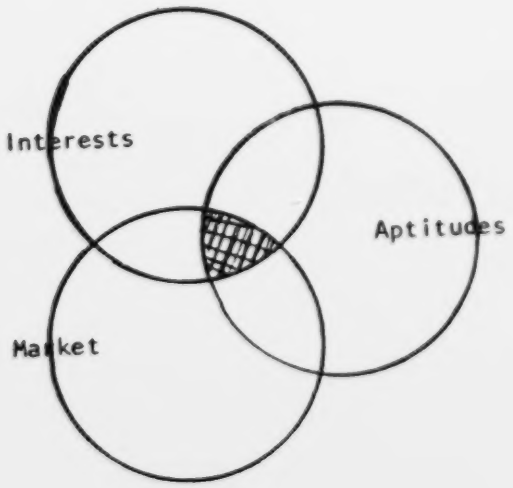
[2]Phi Delta Kappan "Staff Development" Exemplary Practice Series, Centre on Evaluation, Development, Research N.D.

and at play, is encompassed in this kind of planning. The individual is free to examine underlying goals and purposes that give meaning to his/her life; and encouraged to consider how those purposes can best be individually expressed in a work setting.

In the mid-range of our continuum, we can place the term Career Development as it is currently used by many practitioners. This represents an integration of individual career concerns with the human resources concerns of the organization which employs the individual. An attempt is made, in the best Career Development Systems, to negotiate learning opportunities and job responsibilities that achieve a "fit" between company goals and individual goals.

This "fit" can be thought of as a small area of overlap where the interests and aptitudes of the individual employee come together with the organizational "market" for such productivity.



It is at the point of confluence that the individual reaches his/her own deepest levels of motivation and personal commitment to their work. Thus we may claim that at this point, individual and organizational aims are synonymous. While we may think of the individual's career as an ongoing series of moves toward this optimal point, at the same time we must realize that individuals and organizations are dynamic, changing organisms. Therefore, the process of negotiation and re-negotiation is implied in this model.

On the far right of the continuum is Career Management which is shown to have the narrowest focus, that of the "job." Here we are approaching the classical view of management, where the needs of the organization are paramount. The individual fits into the needs of the organization as well as he or she can. This is the business world of historical record; the world of planned succession of jobs, the standard lock-step career path, and the "transfers" which are accepted as "part of the job." This implies a master-servant relationship between employer and employee, and assures the employee that he/she does not have to plan; the company plans, controls, and rewards! We are seeing less of this model today, as our traditional organizations have been unable to withstand the tremendous changes from both within and without! However, the move away from the paternalism of traditional organizations, particularly large bureaucracies, will not come quickly. The internal models that many employees and managers have accepted and use as cognitive bases for decision-making will be slow to change. As educators we have to recognize the new patterns and help to teach them while simultaneously assisting our students to restructure the perceptual frameworks as well as to understand the external changes that are taking place.

II. Lifelong Learning and Careers

Not long ago North Americans thought of their jobs as a form of security. We formed a mental picture of the loyal employee who went to work regularly and performed satisfactorily for their employer for most of their adult lives and could look forward to retirement at the end of this long and stable association. In this same scenario, we could distinguish fairly readily between those who had jobs (vastly different from their leisure lives), and those very few professional people who had careers. Careers carried with them the notion of a professional calling or commitment quite above and beyond that required for satisfactory performance of a job.

How times have changed! Current research tells us that the vast majority of workers in North America are unhappy or at best bored with their work situation. In a recent study involving 350,000 Americans over a sixteen year period, this majority reached eighty percent of all respondents![3]

There may be many complex reasons for this state of affairs, but one pervasive factor is certainly the feeling of being "stuck" in a job and incapable or powerless to influence the situation. As Continuing Educators, I believe we have an important role to play in educating our students to be better able to cope with our inefficient job market by teaching a process that can empower individuals, thereby enabling

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[3]Boles, Richard What Colour is Your Parachute, 10 Speed Press, p. 43, 1986.

participants to take an active role in making changes and taking control over their careers and their lives.

We need only to look at our leading industries to see that Career Development programs are a major thrust of the past decade. These programs are good for employers AND employees. One major de-motivator has been found to be "loss of control" -- the individual who feels that they have no power to influence their surroundings soon becomes apathetic; and both individual satisfaction and organizational productivity are lost. The social costs of this feeling of anomie are tremendous at individual, organizational, and national levels.

When individuals see their present job and life situation as choices that have been made from a reasonable range of alternatives, they are more likely to have feelings of satisfaction and of control. One of our most powerful motivational theories, that of expectancy theory, postulated by Victor H. Vroom, reminds us of the absolute power that each individual exerts when we decide whether to exert high effort or low effort to any given task.[4] We make this decision based to a large extent on whether we feel personally capable of achieving a high performance outcome from our efforts (our "expectancy" of success) and on whether we believe that the high effort and resultant high performance will lead to a desirable outcome (be "instrumental", for us).

Feelings of powerlessness, or of "low expectancy", and "low instrumentality" will naturally lead to low efforts on the job. This phenomenon has been well documented in the literature of management. But

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[4]Victor H. Vroom, quoted in Schermerhorn, Managing Organizational Behaviour, John Wiley & Sons, 1982, pp 117ff.

a process of education which gives workers a feeling of empowerment and of personal control and responsibility can assist individuals with both personal and professional growth and change.

Continuing Educators, especially those of us who work in management training programs, can play key roles in assisting individual career growth and can also play leadership roles within organizations. Our first challenge will be to assist individuals with Life/Career Planning processes. By designing programs that assist individuals to focus squarely on self-knowledge; to examine thoroughly and reflectively what the preferred skills, knowledges, values, and working environments are, we can then equip students to deal with the external issues of job opportunities and job-search strategies. Programs that deal with these external issues before giving the student a thorough grounding in the internal issues, which are unique to each of us, are doing the student a grave disservice which can only result in more frustrated workers and a deepening malaise in our businesses and industries. We must not lose sight of the fact that motivation and satisfaction come from the same wellspring - and it is largely an internal one!

Lifelong learning and career development come together when we realize that our deepest levels of motivation are internal; that to gain a sense of control and influence we must learn to take responsibility for our own choices; and that since we are changing and growing organisms, we will need ongoing challenges throughout our lives. These basic tenets of Career Development are entirely compatible with the philosophy of Continuing Education.

III. Programming Opportunities in Career Development:
Social Need or Market Opportunity?

If we use the growth of Career Development activities within Human Resource and Training departments of major American companies as an indicator, we can predict a dramatic increase in both the scope and substance of career development activities. There will be interest on the part of many service providers -- but it would seem that Continuing Educators have a natural and vested interest in programming for individual career decision-making.

We know that the major motivator for enrollment in adult education is career-related. In a study done by the U.S. College Entrance Board, (Arbeiter) 15,000 adult learners cited "Job Dissatisfaction" as their reason for enrolling in Continuing Education programs.

In a recent article in Training/HRD Magazine, Ron and Susan Zemke point out that adult learners prefer courses where theory can be applied to relevant problems or to personal situations. A course in Career Management can provide the opportunity for students to participate in exercises and activities and to relate the theory directly to their examination of their own careers, lifestyles, and future plans. We also know, from adult education literature, that adults benefit from personal interaction and support whenever new material or skills are being integrated (Zenke). It is for this reason that a regular class or a seminar format with small-group interaction is preferred over any less interactive format.

Students who are learning an active process, with practical assignments such as informational interviewing about career options of interest to them personally, tend to become highly motivated learners.

When we realize that in today's world the average worker changes jobs every three and a half years, (Bolles, 1986) it is easy to see why the career planning process has such immediate and powerful returns for learners.

We know that our entire society is shifting away from a linear lifestyle, with its' strong divisions between learning, working, and playing to a more integrated lifestyle. This has resulted in the dramatic changes we have witnessed in the growth of our Continuing Education programs. Here in Calgary, for example, we have the highest participation rate in Canada, as 27% of our population are engaged in some adult education.[5] Nationally, we know that one in every five adults participate in Continuing Education.

This fundamental attitude shift toward learning as a natural part of our adult life activities has come about as our society moves from the Industrial Age to the Information Age. John Naisbitt, author of Megatrends says this massive and revolutionary shift began in the 1950's and is now well entrenched in North America. We can assume that the technological changes which demand flexibility in the workplace are also affecting the way we assimilate and use the constant flow of information that has become such an important part of our way of life. In a work called "Corporate Classrooms", Nell Eurich documents her claim that business and industry are now spending larger sums on education than are

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[5]5Labour Force Survey Supplement, 1984, quoted in "Education in Calgary, A Spectrum of Excellence", (undated pamphlet available from Calgary Board of Education).

all the traditional institutions - schools, colleges, universities - together.

A third major trend that impacts continuing education programming is a social shift documented by Yankelovich, Sheehy, and others toward increased personal responsibility for our own lives; in essence, seeing our life pattern as a creation in the same way that we might create a work of art. A current poster captures this concept in the phrase "Living well is the best revenge." This attitude shift encourages individuals to put the working life into a holistic perspective, and is illustrated by the reluctance of many employees to accept the organizationally imposed transfers or the company influence over the "right" clubs, schools, and social lives.Other evidence of a re-birth of individual initiative is the tremendous growth in the number of self-employed individuals. In Canada, we have over one million self-employed persons, up thirty percent from just ten years ago.[6]

As John Kettle, editor of "Future Letter" says:

"Those born in the 1950's or early 1960's will have to invent their work or create their own business, not just find a job."

An interesting attitude-shift accompanies this move toward self-determination. More of us are seeing our careers in terms of a life-work, rather than a job; in active, rather than passive terms. This is a natural outgrowth of the commitment that comes from the personal involvement required to plan, research, and identify a life for

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[6]Shannon & Cohen, p. 73.

ourselves, one which truly takes into account our goals, aspirations and values, a true "adult learning project"as defined by Tough.[7]

It is within this dynamic interface between job training and individual career planning that we find new opportunities to program learning experiences. I would submit that we serve both a social and societal need for reflective individual response, and at the same time respond to a market opportunity that has arisen.

The opportunities for Career Development programming may begin with the offering of a Life/Career Planning workshop for individuals, but will carry us forward into other related areas such as:

*Industry-Institution joint programs for groups of employees in turbulent settings.

*Career Education seminars and workshops for professional associations and groups, as they deal with the challenges presented by "downsizing" or stagnant industries.

*Training for Managers who have increasing responsibility for career discussions with employees and who feel inadequate to deal with these new "broadened" roles.

*Training in the planning of Career Development programs for Human Resource practitioners involved in Organizational changes.

*Training for workshop facilitators and seminar leaders, in the field of Career Development.

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[7]Tough, A.M., The Adults' Learning Projects, Toronto, O.I.S.E., 1971.

In summary, I see programming in Career Development as a new "basic" of Continuing Education programs. These initiatives could take many forms, including joint initiatives with business organizations or government departments. In our province we have a new provincial Ministry for Career Development, an encouragement to such joint efforts.

University Continuing Educators have the opportunity and the responsibility to recognize the natural links that exist between our present programming and new programming aimed specifically at helping adult learners to master the career-planning process, to become much clearer about their own life and career goals, and to gain confidence in their ability to reach those goals in an increasingly dynamic environment.

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